Birth, Marriage, and Death

Among the Dukagini I met several virgins, but all wore women's dress. As a rule, in all districts, the sworn virgin became servant to one of the priests, and often joined the Third Order of St. Francis. Some became nuns or worked in one of the Scutari nunneries.

In the Maltsia e Madhe, in the case of a man with several daughters and no son, by his wish one could swear virginity and act as his son. He could bequeath to her his house and land for her lifetime, after which it reverted to the nearest male heir. Such a virgin had the right to sell her younger sisters. Such an one, aged about forty, I met in the Hoti tribe (Plate VIII).

In the Dukagini tribes, where the virgins do not wear men's dress, they cannot inherit and live on and work the land during their lifetime as in Maltsia e Madhe. The land goes to the next male heir, and he must pay the virgin yearly 300 okos of maize, 18 of rakija, and 30 of wine, and she can enforce payment by appeal to the Council of Elders.

One case only did I hear of a virgin breaking her vow. She had been for years servant to the priest of Baitza, and was accounted holy. On his death she was forty, and shocked the country-side by eloping with a Gusinje Moslem. No one dared follow to take vengeance in such a dangerous district, but it was piously hoped that she would pay the price of her crime in hell.

On the way from Berisha to Apripa we passed a huge rock. A virgin, so holy that she was almost a saint, had vowed to carry it to the church at Berisha. She carried it safely a long way. Then in the forest she heard a shepherd fluting, and looked at him and admired him. Straightway she forgot the heavenly things on which she had fixed her mind; she dropped the rock, and when she tried to pick it up again found she had lost her miraculous strength. And there the rock stands.

In spite of many inquiries, I failed to hear of a case of a young man refusing to marry his betrothed bride. People were surprised I should ask and always replied: "But why should he? God has made all women alike." On the other hand, I met some cases of blind fury ending in blood-feud where a father had broken faith and sold his betrothed daughter to someone else. I argued with one man who was "in blood" that it was stupid to want to marry a girl he had never seen and who did not want him—people in other lands would laugh at him. He furiously replied that the girl had been paid for years ago by his father; the return of the bride-price made no difference; she was their property, and he would get her if he had to shoot her husband to do so. His honour and that of his whole house had been blackened. If people in other lands laughed at him it only showed they had no honour.

I asked often why the young men did not choose for themselves,

ALBANIA YESTERDAY AND TODAY

000cessible on account of snow during the winter months.

778 Much festivity pervades in this part of the country in the summer months, for tradition has it that on the summit of Tomori is the grave of Iman Abbas Ali to which many natives make pilgrimages every August from 346 the 19th to 28th. For this purpose, a monastery has been built 1,900 feet below the summit by the Bektashi Dervishes, where the pilgrims and visitors may lodge in comfort before the strenuous climb to the topmost 776 point; and it is another native belief that that top is the seat of the ancient sky-god, related to the Zeus of Dodona and Homer's Olympia, and only certain, privileged mortals may reach his abode, others being warned away by 773 nose bleedings and sickness. Also, there is said to be an inaccessible tree bearing golden apples growing on the summit. The peasants 778 often take oath by "Father Tomori," which mountain they regard with superstitious awe. Tourists to Albania often hear this mountain referred to as "The Olympia of Albania."

771 It is the district of Shpat at the base of 551 Mount Bokanik just to the east of this richly historical center that was in constant dispute

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

CHAPTER XII.

ALBANIAN WOMEN: THEIR FOLK-POESY—FOLK-TALES.

THE subject of Albanian folk-lore attracted many years ago the attention of Von Hahn, whose *Albanesische Studien* and *Griechische und Albanesische Märchen* are well known to folk-lorists throughout Europe. Other collections have since been made by French and Italian students of the language and lore of the Skipetars, not only in their native land, but also in their colonies in Italy, Sicily, and the Greek Islands, where, though long settled, they still remain a distinct race.[1]

Long contact with the neighbouring Greeks has, in South Albania, naturally resulted in much inter-borrowing of folk-tales, and it is often difficult to determine to which nationality a story originally belonged. M. Dozon finds also traces of a Slav origin in several tales contained in his collection, which may have been introduced either by the Bulgarians of Upper Macedonia, or by the Montenegrin settlers in Northern Albania. The pious Pagano-Christian element, as M. Dozon calls the legends of Saints which are found both in Greek and Armenian

[1] See, for instance, Jubany, *Raccolta*, &c.; and Dozon, *Contes Albanais* and *Manuel de la Langue Chkipe*. A small collection, untranslated, referred to by M. Dozon as *L'Abeille Chkipe*, but of which I have not been able to learn the exact title, has also been published at Cairo.

[p. 299]

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

538 177 773 folk-tales, is, however, almost entirely absent from those of the Albanians. Of the so-called religious legends current among the Skipetars, some are of Christian and others of Moslem origin. The following explanation, given by the highlanders, of the [262] reason for the Moslem's distaste for pork, savours, however, rather of Bektashí scepticism. One day, they say, Mohammed went out in company with a Christian on a thieving expedition. Finding nothing else to lay their hands upon, the pair took possession of a sow, which, having killed, they proceeded to divide by drawing lots. As luck would have it, the head, shoulders, and best parts of the carcase fell to the Christian, while the Prophet received as his portion only the tail and the hams. Discontented with his share of the spoil, Mohammed proclaimed the pig unclean, and forbade his followers to eat thenceforward of its flesh.[1]

538 773 Some of the sayings proverbially current among the Albanians have their origin in myths, which are for the most part of a religious character. The phrase, "The drop has fallen," used with reference to any one who has died suddenly, with the connected imprecation, "May the drop fall on thee!" are thus explained. While the rebellious angels were falling [776] from heaven into the abyss, the angel Gabriel called a halt, and every one stopped exactly where he happened to be at that moment. Some had already reached the regions below the earth, others were on the earth itself, while a third section were still in mid-air, where they have remained suspended ever

[1] Compare Hecquard, *La Haute Albanie*, p. 310.

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

since. If the tears of remorse which they are continually shedding happen to fall upon a human being he dies instantaneously. "Suspended devils" also occur in the Armenian legend of the Fall, already related.[1]

The saying, "Eat him, wolf, and make him burst, O Michael," refers to the part played by Satan in the following legend. When God created Adam, Satan, after inspecting him, observed that he did not think highly of His handiwork, and believed himself capable of producing something better. The Lord took Satan's remarks in good part, and gave him leave to try his hand at creation. Satan then kneaded some dough, as he had seen the Lord do, and fashioned it into the shape of a wolf, which he asserted to be equal to God's handiwork. "Thou must give thy creature life," said the Lord to him, "as I have given to mine." So Satan set about doing this, and he blew into the wolf till his black head became red and blue, but to no purpose, for it still remained lifeless. The Lord, finally becoming weary of his vain attempts, struck the wolf on the side with a staff and gave him life. Hence it is that the wolf has a hollow beneath his ribs. God then said to the wolf, "Creature, devour thy creator." What the Archangel Michael has to do with the story does not, however, appear.[2]

Another legend concerning the Devil describes him as fastened by a chain of enormous strength to a rock. The whole year through he gnaws at the links,

[1] Vol. I. p. 272.
[2] Von Hahn, *Albanesische Studien*, p. 165.

2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1
Montenegrins EF5

to my faithful Albanian horseboy, Shan, who had lived all his life in Montenegro. The horse was turned out to graze at night. Next morning, before mounting, I began to comb out its tangled mane with my fingers. Shan anxiously begged me not to. The vilas, he said, had been making love to it all night because it was a beauty. It had been covered with sweat. If I untied the knots the vilas had made we should have an accident. Shan, being an Albanian, probably meant the "ore" when he said "vila." I heard of no other case of a vila acting thus. But the ore are notorious for such conduct.

A M 777 773 887 *Hidden Treasure.*—As in Albania, so all through Montenegro and the Herzegovina, and probably in other Balkan lands, it is believed that mighty treasures lie hidden. The treasure of the Royal Nemanjas has yet to be found, and that of Voyvoda Momchilo at Pirlitor.

Opinions differ as to the best means of treasure-hunting. The most certain thing is when the site of the treasure is revealed in a dream; you are then sure to find it. If a steer that is perfectly black stands still on a spot, bellows, and butts his horns into the ground, there is almost surely treasure beneath. But there must not be a single white hair on the steer. If when the third cock crows in the morning a number are seen gathered together holding council, there is surely treasure beneath the spot.

Vuk Vrchevitch gives a good account of treasure-seeking in the Herzegovina. A certain man dreamed of hidden treasure. Early before the sun rose he went with some of his brethren in search of it, and took with him a black cock and a black wether. Arrived at the spot, he killed the wether and made a circle of blood round the site. They began to dig, and after a while reached a slab of stone. On this the black cock was sacrificed. They were now so near success that one of the brethren cried aloud: "God help us now and for ever." But God's name must not be invoked in aid of magic. When they raised the slab they found, indeed, a stone box—but the treasure had been turned to ashes.

Some poisoned water should be carried when treasure-hunting to kill the serpent which often guards it.

If a black stallion is led to the spot where treasure is suspected to lie and refuses to walk over it, it shows treasure is, or was, there. The foundation for these tales is the large number of Roman and prehistoric graves that have been opened. The ashes and fragments of iron and bronze found in them were ascribed to the fact that a wrong spell had been used and the treasure transmuted to something valueless —in the eyes of the searchers.

A 777 787 *A Magic Plant.*—In Albania I was told there grows a most valuable plant. Any stone or iron touched by a leaf of it at once falls to pieces. To persons thievishly inclined it is extremely useful. The difficulty is